

# The Oakland Baptist Church

Several residents of “The Fort” community were founders of the Oakland Baptist Church, which is located at the intersection of King Street and Braddock Road. The congregation started worshiping in a bush arbor as Oak Hill Baptist Mission in 1888 and moved to 3408 King Street in 1893. Despite the hardships associated with the community's relocation and the development of Fort Ward into a historical park, the Oakland Baptist Church and Cemetery survive and stand as symbols of the self-sufficiency, integrity, and longevity of this distinctive African American community.



Courtesy Oakland Baptist Church and Frances (Johnson) Colbert Terrell

After a fire destroyed the original structure in 1931, Rev. Howard Barnes oversaw the construction of a new, one-story church. In this 1939 photograph, Rev. Barnes (left) and chairman of the Trustee Board, Rev. Samuel T. Moore (right), start building the church's second-floor sanctuary. Congregation members completed the project the next year. Rev. Barnes served as pastor of Oakland Baptist Church for 22 years.



Courtesy Oakland Baptist Church and Frances (Johnson) Colbert Terrell, daughter, niece and granddaughter

Members (left to right) of the Oakland Baptist Church Deacon Board: (back row) Rev. Luther H. Mills, Morris Johnson, Joseph Wanzer, Clarence Summers, Louis Douglas, Wilson Robinson, and Amos Turner; (front row) Douglas Johnson and Richard Nelson. In the mid-1940s, these appointed officers assisted Pastor Mills, the longest-serving pastor in Oakland Baptist Church history, in the temporal, physical, and spiritual needs of the church.

## Oakland Baptist Church Founders

Clara Shorts Adams  
William Carpenter  
John Wesley Casey  
Maggie Hall  
Brooks Johnson  
Mollie Nelson  
Nancy Shepherd  
Harriet McKnight Shorts  
Daniel Simms Sr.  
James William Terrell  
Smith Wanzer  
Matilda Woods



John Wesley Casey  
Courtesy Joyce Casey Sanchez, granddaughter

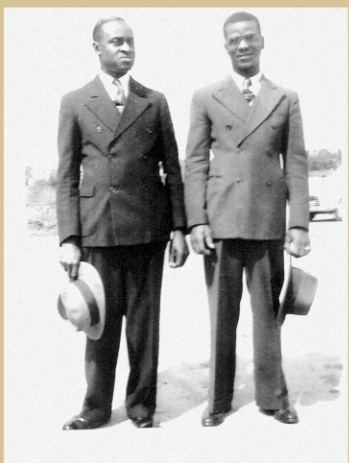
The words of “Miss Lizabeth” make evident the church members' fervent sense of community, determination, and self-sufficiency:

*“They weren’t what you call builders, but they helped to build the church. Rev. Barnes, he had been sick. And in 1939 he was getting back on his feet pretty good. And Rev. Moore, he was helping him to finish the church up there as well. And then the fellas from the Episcopal High School and Seminary, when they had a breakfast break or a lunch break, they would come down here and help.”*

Courtesy of Elizabeth Henry Douglas

The Deacon Board set a strict moral and social code that guided the Oakland Baptist Church members' lives beyond the church walls. Deacon John Wesley Casey, a founder of the church and chairman of the Deacon Board, testified at the Fairfax County Circuit Court divorce case Bailey v. Bailey in 1909:

*“... and we called her before the church board, as we have a board there to call up such things before them, and she said she was not going to stop ... and he said he was not going to stop, and under these circumstances we expelled them from the church.”*



Courtesy Oakland Baptist Church and Frances (Johnson) Colbert Terrell, daughter

Deacons James Lewis, Jr. (left), and Delaney Colbert (right), a Sunday School teacher, were long-serving members of the Oakland Baptist Church's Deacon Board. Deacon Lewis was the longest-serving member of the board in church history. During his 55 years on the Board, Deacon Lewis served as chairman for 38 years.



Courtesy Oakland Baptist Church and Frances (Johnson) Colbert Terrell

Superintendent Deacon Amos Turner (back row, center) and teachers, Deacon Morris Johnson (back row, second from right) and Elizabeth Henry Douglas (far right), stand with a mid-1960s Oakland Baptist Church Sunday School class. The church served as a house of worship and a social gathering place. Special programs such as “Homecoming” and “Family and Friends Day” involved sister churches. There were gospel concerts and “Tom Thumb Weddings,” at which children assumed the roles of bride and groom. The Sunday School sponsored annual excursions to Sparrows Beach and Coney Island, followed by camp week at the Northern Virginia Baptist Center in Gainesville, Virginia.



Courtesy Oakland Baptist Church and Bill Reeves Photography

The Oakland Baptist Church on King Street, pictured after its 1999 renovation, continues to serve the African American community. It represents the strength and dedication of early church founders and descendant families, many of whom still live in the area. The mission statement is “To Know God, Follow Christ, and Share by the Spirit's Power.”



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